

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School
2335 Redondo Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108**

April 23, 2007



**Utah State Office of Education
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School
2335 Redondo Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108**

April 23, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ii
Utah State Board of Education.....	iii
Catholic Diocese Schools Administration and J. E. Cosgriff Memorial Catholic School Administration and Staff.....	1
J. E. Cosgriff Memorial Catholic School Mission Statement and Belief Statements	2
Members of the Visiting Team	3
Visiting Team Report.....	4
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	4
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	7
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	7
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness.....	8
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals.....	8
Curriculum Development.....	9
Quality Instructional Design	10
Quality Assessment Systems	11
Leadership for School Improvement.....	11
Community Building.....	13
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning	13
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards	14
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	14
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	15

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 23, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Betsy Hunt is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at J.E. Cosgriff Memorial School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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12/10/2006

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Sister Catherine Kamphaus..... Superintendent

J.E. COSGRIFF MEMORIAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Betsy Hunt Principal
Holly Dean Assistant Principal

Counseling

Kay Bush..... Counselor

Support Staff

Kim Marron, Office Manager

Maggie Kearns, Asst. Office Manager

Faculty

Joyce Acosta
Brett Allen
David Asman
Raquel Austin
Alisa Brough
Tammie Cleverly
Joan Corey
Holly Dean
Didrian Euan
Lucely Euan

Gary Green
Jeramie Green
Sue Hamburge
Betsy Hunt
Maggie Kearns
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Trish McCormick
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Nedda Oswald
Linda Paoletti
Charlotte Percell
Lisa Romero
Fr. Bill Wheaton
Marissa Wilson

J. E. COSGRIFF MEMORIAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of J.E. Cosgriff Memorial Catholic School is to
Guide Our Students to Become Respectful, Responsible, and Productive Citizens
Through Quality Academic Instruction that is
Grounded in Catholic Teaching and Tradition

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- We are a Catholic community of teachers, administrators, parishioners, parents and students who share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
- Each student is a valued "Child of God" with unique physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs.
- All students can learn.
- A variety of instructional practices and assessments are necessary to support the learning styles of every student.
- A safe and well maintained environment promotes student learning.
- Students learn best when actively engaged in the learning process.
- The commitment to continuous improvement is imperative to assist students in becoming self-confident and self directed lifelong learners.
- We must prepare our students to be caring individuals through Christian community service.
- We need to provide opportunities to learn and practices core Catholic values through social and life skills.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. Christine Huley, Granite School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Mrs. Nancy Anderson, Millcreek Junior High School, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

J.E. COSGRIFF MEMORIAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

The J.E. Cosgriff Memorial Catholic School is so named because it was built thorough the generosity of the Cosgriff and Sturdevant families in memory of J.E. Cosgriff, husband of the late Mrs. Mildred Cosgriff. Mrs. J.E. Cosgriff and Mr. Walter Cosgriff were living at the time the gift was made and were numbered among the donors.

The McCarthy Center was dedicated on May 12, 2002. It was named after the late Thomas Kearns and Jane Finn-McCarthy because of their generous donation toward the building. They were longtime members of St. Ambrose Parish.

The first school session began on September 3, 1957, with six grades and a kindergarten. The Daughters of Charity staffed the school initially and continued with the school until 1991. Through the years the school has expanded to kindergarten through eighth grade. The Extended Day Program was added in 1993.

In the summer of 1990, the convent chapel was remodeled into an art studio and science laboratory for the school. It was named the Marceau Studio/Lab after the second pastor of the parish. Also, a computer laboratory was created out of part of the book storage area. Instruction in computer science, as well as the use of computers, has become a necessary part of the school's curriculum.

In 1992, the Daughters of Charity were no longer able to provide sisters for Cosgriff School, and the school hired its first lay principal and an entire lay faculty and staff. The convent was leased by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. In the summer of 1993, the school office was remodeled to accommodate an office for development. The operational costs of a Catholic school had so increased that a development office with various fundraising programs became absolutely necessary.

In the summer of 1996, the Vaughan Center duplex was razed and a new, larger building was constructed. It is still called the Vaughan Center, but has two large rooms for meetings and extended day care, a kitchen, restrooms, and several offices for parish staff.

In July and August of 1997, the Cosgriff School was seismically upgraded to withstand earthquakes of moderate scale. This upgrading involved a new roof, sheer steel interior walls, new lighting, and a complete refurbishing of the school building.

In the summer of 1998, the school was air conditioned and the final upgrading completed. New playground equipment was installed. The Holy Cross Sisters moved out of the convent, and the building was used for the offices of the bereavement/homebound

director and the coordinator of volunteers. School aides also used rooms there for instruction.

During 1999 a handicapped ramp was built in the north school hallway so that access from the classrooms to the library, gym, and computer room would be more readily available.

In 2001 the convent was razed and the three-floor McCarthy Center was added to the school. The Center houses an art studio, science lab, computer lab, music room, several offices, a faculty lounge, and a youth gathering room. It was also named for former parishioners Thomas Kearns and Jane Finn-McCarthy, whose family donated one-third of the cost of the building. It has been a welcome addition to the school and parish. On the top floor is Marceau Hall, a parish meeting room named for Rev. Valmore C. Marceau, the second pastor of St. Ambrose.

In June 2003 new double-paned windows were installed throughout the school. The building is now cooler in warm weather and warmer in cool weather.

After nearly 22 years, Msg. Hedderman retired. On January 1, 2004, Bishop George H. Niederauer appointed Rev. William F. Wheaton pastor of St. Ambrose. Rev. Gally Gregory Lourduraj later joined St. Ambrose as associate pastor.

J.E. Cosgriff currently has 350 students enrolled in preschool through eighth grade. Cosgriff offers a full academic program, including special resource classes and counseling services. The counseling center is an integral part of the school's academic teams, focusing on social skills and character education values.

Cosgriff has a traditional elementary school for grades 1-5 and a traditional middle school model for grades 6-8. Teacher planning periods are scattered throughout the day, based on core subject and specialty classes. The teaching strategies used most often across grade levels include direct instruction, modeling, small group instruction, guided practice followed by independent practice, cooperative learning, multi-sensory instruction, strategy instruction, graphic and/or advanced organizers, and directed response instruction. Many teachers also use segmenting and sequencing, elaboration, formative evaluation, and differentiated instruction. To meet the needs of the students from preschool to eighth grade, teachers rely on different strategies according to the developmental needs of their age group. The teachers at J.E. Cosgriff incorporate classroom accommodations and behavioral intervention strategies when necessary to help meet the needs of students who require this additional support.

The school has a strong focus on religious education and Catholic values. Religious teaching and doctrines are incorporated into all aspects of the daily curriculum. All classes begin and end each day with prayers and personal intentions. Students attend all-school and class masses on a monthly basis. All important feast and holy days are celebrated on a school-wide basis. The parish priest visits classes and further instructs

students on their Catholic faith. Catholic Schools' Week is observed annually to celebrate and honor the Catholic traditions of the school.

J.E. Cosgriff also has a strong focus on citizenship and civic responsibility. A variety of monthly school-wide community service projects provide opportunities for students to realize and take part in activities that serve the needs of less fortunate members of the community at large, such as supporting the Utah Food Bank, Catholic Community Services, YWCA, the Road Home, the Good Samaritan Program, and families within the local community.

One of the school's strengths is the support and involvement of its parent and parish community. The school is supported by an active HSA Board, Finance Council, Building Committee, Technology Committee, and Parish Community Council. All school families volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per school year in a variety of ways, such as fundraising, school improvements, recess duty, office support, teacher appreciation activities, supervision and driving for field trips, and as library and classroom aides.

J.E. Cosgriff has a faculty dedicated to providing a positive learning environment and helping each student to learn. The school is focused on helping its students develop life skills for becoming responsible, productive citizens in a rapidly changing global society.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The Cosgriff School currently has 350 students enrolled in preschool through eighth grade. Cosgriff offers a full academic program, including special education, resource classes, and counseling services. The majority of the student body is Caucasian, and a small minority is Hispanic or Asian. The student population is primarily Catholic, made up of students from the families from the Saint Ambrose Parish. The SAT has been the assessment tool to determine student learning in language arts and math. The results of the 2006 SAT indicate high levels of learning for students in these areas. The administration, however, has introduced specific assessment tools in the area of literacy. These include DIBELS, DRA, QRI, AIMS, and other informal reading assessments. The school leadership sees the need for specific benchmark assessments to identify who is learning and who is not.

The school leadership recognizes that Catholic identity is an area that needs focus and attention. Observational data indicates that symbols and actions that model Catholicity are evident; however, this is a focus area for the Cosgriff School.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Additional data is needed to further disaggregate student learning needs. The principal and the State Office of Education continue to investigate the use of the

Criterion-Referenced Tests to measure students' mastery of State Core and essential concepts.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

The staff has done a good job of providing adequate data in the profile to develop an effective action plan. The Visiting Team is confident that the school leadership team will continue to focus on the areas identified in the action plan, and that the organizational areas outlined by NSSE will be revisited and refined.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Interviews with parents and staff members show that the school community was invited to participate in the accreditation process. However, participation has been limited. This may be partly due to the recent change in administration and staff, as well as the understanding of the accreditation process. Though efforts have been made to be inclusive, the evidence suggests that collaboration is at an emerging stage, and recommendations are included for a more comprehensive and collaborative process to be incorporated and continued in relation to the accreditation process.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The self-study report does an effective job of conveying the school's current strengths and limitations. Though the data is small in quantity, it does reflect what the faculty, parents, and students all shared and discussed with the Visiting Team. It is evident that this represents a sufficient analysis of the school's current programs and practices, and that it is aligned to a satisfactory school improvement process, with changes made as the Visiting Team recommends in relation to the focus groups and NSSE rubrics.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

J. E. Cosgriff Memorial Catholic School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Responsible Christian
 - Demonstrates knowledge of beliefs and traditions of the Catholic Church through reverence.
 - Actively participates in the Catholic faith community by showing respect.
 - Proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ in their daily lives by practicing responsibility
2. Effective Communication
 - Students communicate with clarity, purpose and understanding of audience.
 - Students integrate the use of a variety of communication forms and use a wide variety of communication skills.
 - Students recognize and evaluate various forms of communication (reading, writing, and oral language).
3. Complex Thinking and Reasoning Skills
 - Students gather, classify, organize and use information effectively to gain new knowledge.
 - Students support inferences and justify conclusion.
 - Students utilize, evaluate and refine the use of multiple strategies to solve a variety of types of problems.
 - Students generate new and creative ideas in a variety of contexts.
4. Life Long Learners
 - Students make a commitment to creating quality work and striving for excellence.
 - Students use a variety of learning strategies, personal skills, and time management skills to enhance learning.
 - Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of improvement.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Over the course of several years, the school has facilitated a process to build a shared vision for the mission that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school. Stakeholders have been included at many levels and in various ways, including but not limited to open door policies with the administration, parent involvement within the classes, participation on committees, the Home and School Association, and a career-related committee that has worked with the teachers to help bring in resources to the classrooms. There is a great sense of ownership and involvement from the stakeholders in the process of developing a mission and vision for the school. This has proven to be effective and inclusive.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The beliefs and vision identified in the mission statement, DRSLs, and graduate profile reflect an effective commitment from the administration and staff in supporting student achievement and success. These beliefs are reflected in procedures and practices observed by the Visiting Team. Continued refinement and the establishment of benchmarks for success are necessary.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The school's mission and beliefs effectively align to and support the school's DRSLs. Further work on defining what the DRSLs would look like in the classroom is the next step in this process to help ensure student success. Current assessment shows that the alignment is effective, yet improving with greater familiarity and implementation.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

It is apparent that the staff is working collaboratively to align their curricula. Individual teachers have created curriculum maps, and it is recommended that work continue in this area. In discussions with the Visiting Team, teachers referred to the State Core Curriculum as the source for the mapping and alignment of classroom instruction and activities.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The Cosgriff staff works collaboratively very effectively. They informally share development ideas and suggestions for improvement on a regular basis. However, the conversation has just begun about how to develop and assess a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The Visiting Team saw evidence of a variety of effective instructional strategies in the classroom, strategies that not only engage students but also address a variety of learning styles. The Visiting Team observed teachers using group work, demonstrations, direct instruction, discussion, webbing, technology-aided instruction, and pre-writing activities, to name a few. While many teachers were very effective with these methods, the Visiting Team recommends that all teachers continue to explore best practices that will actively engage all students in learning.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

In each of the classes observed, teachers were using a variety of instructional strategies. Most teachers varied the strategies, changing at least twice during the class period. However, in discussion with teachers it was noted that differentiation for diverse levels of learners is an area in which they recognize that growth can and should occur.

There is evidence of opportunities for students who are at lower levels of reading and learning to be assisted in small groups, and to have access to additional help in reading. It is recommended that these practices continue and, where possible, to be enhanced.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The Visiting Team recommends that teachers continue to work with special education teachers, as well as participate in staff development to help articulate ways to increase differentiation between high- and lower-level learners. It is recommended by the Visiting Team that the administration continue to provide opportunities for instruction growth in this area. We acknowledge and applaud the beginnings of opportunities such as the volunteer reading helper program and the Homework Club.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Classroom and/or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement are emerging as the faculty articulates a standards-based framework for learning. As identified in the self-study, this need has been included as part of the action plan and is found in the Visiting Team's recommendations. It is believed that the dedication of the staff to their students' success will foster a vision for successful implementation of more clear and measurable standards.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Understanding and appreciation for the importance of using multiple assessments in evaluating student performance is emerging as a potential strength for the staff of Cosgriff. The administration is dedicated to providing opportunities for staff development in this area, and the staff is encouraged to continue the process of developing and using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards. The staff members are encouraged to work and share together as they continue their efforts to develop a procedure to concisely identify performance standards and tie appropriate assessment instruments to those standards.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

The Visiting Team recognizes that the students and parents feel that the staff is dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing environment at Cosgriff. Consistent with that belief are the founding principles of equity and fairness in developing and utilizing assessments of student learning. The staff continues to develop and incorporate additional strategies for differentiation, focus on clearly stated objectives for student-driven learning, and engage students in more active learning with real-world applications. These strategies reinforce equity for all students.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership has focused on early identification of literacy needs, and they are providing intervention and support for students with reading challenges. Smaller class sizes are being implemented in the first and second grade for the 2007-2008

school year by adding one additional class in these grade levels. The school leadership reinforces the Core Curriculum and is actively pursuing assessments that will identify student learning needs. Professional development aligns with student learning needs.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The school leadership is aware of and uses the data available to facilitate conversations and work on the action plan with the staff. All professional development and supplemental materials are research-based.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The school leadership realizes the importance of ongoing assessments to monitor student learning. Teachers and administrators reflect on student learning in their classes and school-wide to adjust the programs and instructional practices that affect student learning.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The students, parents, and teachers have indicated that the Cosgriff School is a safe place for all students. Parents and students are proud to be a part of this school community and the Catholic identity it provides for all students and educators.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The school leadership aligns resources with the needs of the students, as outlined in the action plan, the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school leadership has supported the organization of vertical and grade level conversations around the learning needs of students. Although this is an emerging concept, the Cosgriff teaching staff realizes the importance of purposeful collaborative structures and will continue to build them.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The members of the school community are supportive and helpful to each other. Parents, students, and staff members comment on the nurturing and caring that is demonstrated for both the students and the adults in the building. There is a climate of a Catholic community that in the upcoming years will be expanded upon. The Family Program provides an authentic opportunity for students to mentor younger students in the school. The numerous service projects for people in need are noted by the students, parents, and staff.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Numerous opportunities are available to students, staff, and parents that extend to the community and support student learning. A mentor program has been established in the school that supports the relationship between young and older students. Projects such as the Art and Harvest Family Festival invite the community to be involved in the education and values of the school. Numerous volunteers are involved in classes, recess, the Homework Club, and tutoring. There is a strong sense of community and supportive parents and staff who make this a reality.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Professional development that is ongoing and job-embedded is provided. Weekly professional release allows the faculty members to meet in grade level and vertical teams, and to be involved in professional learning that focuses on the skills they need to best address the learning needs of the students. The areas of literacy and differentiation are school-wide emphases. Individual teachers can choose to attend professional learning opportunities; however, the school leadership has a vision for the school that aligns with the learning needs of students, and professional development has to support those areas.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school leadership is aware of the need for teachers and staff members to understand the change process as the needs of students change. This emphasis will be ongoing. Clear goals for school improvement are developing, and supporting teachers through the process of change as they implement instructional strategies that support student learning is a critical area that needs to be nurtured and developed.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS

J. E. Cosgriff School is in compliance with all NAAS standards for accreditation. Over the years, the school has worked diligently to maintain the accreditation standards as outlined by the NAAS and the Utah State Office of Education. The school's curriculum is aligned with the Utah State Core Curriculum. All professional educators are properly licensed and endorsed for their particular assignments, in accordance with Utah state requirements. The school is financially viable and ethical in its business practices. J.E. Cosgriff School has created and maintained a culture of continuous improvement that supports student achievement.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

One of the results of the self-study was the identification of a need to focus on literacy, differentiated instruction, benchmark assessments through the use of curriculum maps, and a stronger focus on Catholic identity. Professional development for the school will focus on these critical areas, and the school leadership is committed to following up with these areas.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The staff recognizes that the self-study is the beginning of a six-year process to implement change. Parents and students are also committed. The principal is new to the school, and is committed to ensuring the learning success of each student.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up will include focused professional development on an ongoing basis and the use of the self-study to guide the work of the school. The faculty, staff, and community are committed to the process and implementation outlined in the action plan.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the staff members for their dedication and willingness to go the extra mile to meet the learning and social needs of each student.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration and staff for providing a school climate that is nurturing and responsive to the individual student.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for their commitment to collaborative planning for student learning, the development of intervention plans, and community projects that enhance Catholic identity.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for implementing literacy assessments that provide early identification of students who experience reading challenges.
- The Visiting Team commends each grade level for incorporating the use of technology in teaching relevant, real-life skills across the curriculum.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, administration, and parents on their courage and fidelity in addressing student learning needs that require change.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty on their evaluation of student learning and their ability to make changes in instructional strategies, based on professional development, that support best research-based strategies.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the Cosgriff School community continue to develop a culture of Catholicity with input from students, parents, teachers, and the administration.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the Cosgriff faculty and stakeholders revisit the accreditation process to gain a more complete understanding of the Continuous School Improvement model.
- The Visiting Team recommends that departments focus on developing objectives and benchmarks to ensure student competency in the Core Curriculum.
- The Visiting Team recommends that teachers and the administration continue to gather and more thoroughly disaggregate student data to identify who is learning and who is not.
- The Visiting Team recommends a focus on understanding and implementing guidelines for literacy and differentiation, and that this be made a focus for school-wide professional learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends vertical and grade level-focused conversations on the strengths and needs of students, as an opportunity for cross-curricular projects.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school community identify indicators and measurable objectives for the DRSLs.